

2405 IH-35 South, Suite 102
New Braunfels, Texas 78130

4-E1-71
RH

Schweers Historical Foundation, Inc.

May 14, 2003

Ms. Jaya Zyman-Ponebshek
URS Corporation
P.O. Box 201088
Austin, TX 78720-1088

Re: STB Finance Docket No. 34284, Southwest Gulf Railroad Company-
Construction and Operation Exemption-Medina County, TX;
Request for Preliminary Comments.

Dear Madam:

This letter is our response to a letter from the Surface Transportation Board (STB) dated March 31, 2003 requesting comments from Federal, state and local agencies that may have information regarding the environmental impacts of this project.

Attached hereto is a copy of our letter dated May 13, 2003 to Congressman Henry Bonilla, which states our position regarding this project, and our interest regarding it.

We feel the environmental impact of the 'Proposed Route' would be quite insignificant, and less than Alternates 1, 2, and 3 because it is the shortest route, and because it appears to cross the Quilhi Creek at the existing gas line right of way. At this location, the Quilhi Creek is not normally flowing at all, or very little.

Below this point are wide, deep water holes with springs flowing throughout the year. Below that are wetlands and marshes. These would not be good areas to cross the creek. We do not know about the point where Alternate 3 crosses the Quilhi Creek, but doubt that it would be better than the Proposed Route, and it is 2500 feet longer.

We believe an elevated bridge for the spur track crossing the Quilhi Creek at the gas line right of way (see map enclosed) would have negligible adverse effect on the environment and wildlife.

Sincerely,

Donald S. Schnoch

Donald S. Schnoch
President

[Click here and type slogan]

2105 IH-35 South, Suite 102
New Braunfels, Texas 78130-6817
830-620-6350

Schweers Historical Foundation, Inc.

May 14, 2003

Congressman Henry Bonilla
11120 Wurzbach, Suite 300
San Antonio, Texas 78230

Dear Congressman Bonilla:

Schweers Historical Foundation, Inc. was incorporated on May 14, 2002 with 501 (c) (3) tax exemption status for the purpose of acquiring, restoring, and preserving historic homes and related structures in the Quilhi, Texas area, and to develop a museum, library, and recreational facilities for the enjoyment of the general public. Our immediate goal is to acquire homes of the descendants of Schweer and Zeda Balzen. Our vision is to promote the restoration and preservation of historic homes and buildings throughout the Quilhi community. Quilhi is one of four (4) colonies created by Henry Castro, and is significant to Texas German-American history. We already have over one hundred members, with potential for many more in the near future.

Vulcan Material Company has chartered a short line railroad company called Southwest Gulf Railroad, which is to serve their transportation needs for a new quarry to be located in Medina County. Their planned railroad spur track will cross the Quilhi Creek near the historic homes of Heinrich & Johanna Schweers (1858), Wilhelm & Elizabeth Schweers (1884), Hoyo & Margarite Schweers (1865), and Mimke & Thontje Saathoff (1846).

The Heinrich Schweers and Wilhelm Schweers homes are located on land recently purchased by Vulcan Material Company for their spur track. Descendants of the Schweers families asked Vulcan if they would consider selling the homes so they could be restored and preserved. The Vulcan folks were not only willing to let us acquire the homes, but are donating them to us! They have elected to do this regardless of approval by the Federal Surface Transportation Board, and other authorities, to build the track. We support Vulcan's objective to develop a quarry and the spur track for the following reasons:

1. Transportation is a large part of the total cost of their delivered products. Medina County will benefit substantially by having a quarry located locally by virtue of lower transportation costs. Transportation by rail is far superior to trucking. It produces less traffic, less road wear and tear, far less dust, less danger with slow moving trains on a spur track, less noise, more environmentally friendly, and is more economical. Transportation is planned to be principally by rail.
2. The proposed project would make the combined Vulcan Operation and Southwest Gulf Railroad the largest private employer in Medina County. On a percentage basis, the impact of Vulcan and Southwest Gulf Railroad's project on the employment opportunities for Medina County residents would be more than twice that of the proposed Toyota Project's impact on neighboring Bexar County. San Antonio fought very hard to get Toyota, and with good reason!

There is nothing permanent except change! Rogers

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3. Vulcan would be the largest single private payer of county and local school district taxes in the county. This is significant when considering most land around the area is agriculturally exempt property generating very little taxes for Medina County. This project would provide increased County and School tax benefits.
4. Vulcan has a proud history of responsible community involvement. Proof of this is how they stepped in and helped our Foundation regardless of any monetary benefit to themselves. They will undoubtedly be contributing to Medina County in many positive ways, as they have in other communities.
5. Vulcan plans to develop a modern quarry with "state of the art" equipment. Air scrubbers will remove virtually all dust in the production phases, loaded cargo will be sprayed with water, and trains on rail create little dust. As we all know, water is a precious commodity in south Texas; however, the water to be utilized by the proposed project is for beneficial use, as there are substantial good paying jobs being created. Vulcan is a leader in water recycling and conservation.
6. The proposed quarry is located within a rural and sparsely populated area without a paved road within nearly three (3) miles of the site. This is in contrast to quarries in neighboring Bexar County that have become surrounded by expensive homes! With the exceptionally remote location, the effects of vibration, noise, and dust would be minimal.
7. New Braunfels is also a very historic area of Texas. It is a fast-growth town and people are attracted to it as visitors and homeowners. They like the rural atmosphere, the natural beauty, and the small town atmosphere. Yet, it has several railroad tracks serving many trains each day and several quarries in full view from busy IH 35. With modern equipment in place at the quarries, dust, noise, blasting, and train traffic are not now issues in the community. Problems are resolved as they occur.

It has been said, "there is nothing permanent except change." You cannot stop change, but you can control it. Growth is heading towards Quilhi like a big tidal wave. The inevitable change will best be handled by communities that plan for it, and companies like Vulcan Material Company, who are community oriented and experienced in the care of our environment, our wildlife, and the history and legacy in Quilhi and Medina County. At your convenience, we would like to meet with you to answer any questions you might have, and to discuss our position.

Sincerely,

Donald S. Schoch,
President

